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HENRIK IBSEN: CRITICAL STUDIES

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INTRODUCTION

Henrik Ibsen, who is considered by some critics as the world's first modern dramatist, was born in the town of Skien, Norway, on March 20, 1828. His father, Knud Ibsen, was a well-to-do merchant but became bankrupt when Henrik reached the age of eight. From then on Henrik knew what poverty and struggles meant.

He attended what is known in Norway as the "middle-class school" but at the age of fifteen he was forced to care for himself. We then hear of his being apprenticed to an apothecary in Grimstad where he worked until he reached his twenty-first year. Meanwhile he was studying to prepare himself to take the examination at the University of Christiania, but he never became a student of the University for he failed in the subjects of Greek and mathematics.

Ibsen occupied his time in writing various kinds of literary work and in the year 1851 he was engaged as "dramatic author" for the theatre in Bergen.

It was five days after the presentation of "The Feast at Solhoug," which was a brilliant success at the Bergen Theatre, that Ibsen met Susannah Thoresen who later became his wife. Much of Ibsen's future success was due to the keen understanding and heart-felt cooperation of his wife, sharing his poverty and later his success with him.

For five years Ibsen remained the director of the Christiana Norwegian Theatre. Then, in 1864, he left Norway for Rome where he spent four years. The years 1868-1891, he resided with his family in Dresden and later in Munich, making occasional visits to Scandinavia.

In 1891 he returned to his native land where he enjoyed his success and prosperity until death claimed him on May 23, 1906.

"Thus his life was transmuted into lasting works of art, and in these works his life endures forever. Because he never was anything but a poet, he was able to create works which rise in austere, virile forms, filled with the blood from his own heart. And because he gave every drop of blood to his writing, his writing acquired so powerful a life content for new and yet new generation. It bears witness of what he was: a poet, and a Man."[1]

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1. Halvdan Koht, The Life of Ibsen, Vol.II.,pp.327,328.

I. HENRIK IBSEN'S PERSONAL APPEARANCE

Henrik Ibsen's personal appearance is suggestive of the qualities he has revealed in his writings. Though the expression of his face was usually stern or critical, yet the close observer could occasionally catch a glimpse of kindliness. To those who were not reckoned among his friends or acquaintances he appeared gruff and taciturn. To the stranger he did not offer any encouragement to conversation.

Ibsen was short of stature and thick-set. His head was large and striking, with its thick mane of gray hair, which he wore rather long. He had a high and broad forehead which seemed to give the impression of strength and greatness of intellect. His mouth, when closed, was compressed as if void of the upper lip. His blue-gray eyes were so keen that they seemed to pierce through the exterior into the very innermost parts. The spreading white beard, which was cut in English fashion, gave the last touch of dignity to his appearance.

George Brandes, who was well known to Ibsen, says of him: "I know two expressions in his face. The first is that in which a smile, Ibsen's kind, beautiful smile, breaks through and animates the mask of his countenance, all the geniality and cordiality that lie deepest

down in his heart coming out to meet one. Ibsen is slightly embarassed in manner, as melancholy, serious natures are apt to be. But he has this charming smile, and smile, glance, and hand-clasp say much that he neither would nor could clothe in words. Sometimes, too, in the course of a conversation, with a sly laugh, and an expression of good-natured roguishness, he will let fall some short, sharp, anything but amicable expression of dissent, which nevertheless reveals all that is most amiable in his character. The smile atones for the sharpness.

"But I also know another expression in his face, that which is called forth by impatience, wrath, righteous indignation, biting scorn: an expression of almost cruel severity, which recalls the lines in his beautiful old poem of 'Terje Vigen':-

> 'But when, on days of storm, his eye
> Gleamed like the stormy day,
> The boldest came not willingly
> In Terje Vigen's way.'

"It is with this expression that, as a poet, he has most frequently shown himself to the world."[1]

Ibsen usually wore a frock coat of black broadcloth, a white tie, and an immaculate silk hat. In giving the stage directions of Borkman in the play, 'John Babriel Borkman,' in the second act, the author is giving us a picture of himself. He has Borkman stand with his hands

1. George Brandes, Henrik Ibsen, Bjornstjerne Bjornson. Critical Studies p.47

behind his back, a favorite pose of his own, and has him "of middle height, a well-knit, powerfully built man, well on in the sixties. His appearance is distinquished, his profile finely cut, his eyes piercing, his hair and beard curly and greyish-white. He is dressed in a slightly old-fashioned black coat, and wears a white necktie." How well Ibsen knew his own personal appearance!

II. IBSEN'S RELATIONS WITH BJORNSON

Henrik Ibsen, the international poet, made his first acquaintance with Björnstjerne Bjørnson, the national poet, in 1850, while they were both students at Heltberg's, a school known as a "student factory", located in Christiania. Their mutual love for Norwegian poetry was the tie which later bound these two men together in a friendship which deepened as the years passed.

When "The Feast at Solhoug" was presented in Bergen in 1856, it met with a great success but the critics in Christiania were not so ready to accept it. Consequently, Björnson defended it in the newspaper, "Morgenbladet." When "The Vikings" appeared, he considered it the most strongly dramatic production that had up to that time appeared in Norway.

In 1859 Ibsen, who later became such a strong opponent of unions, persuaded Björnson to assist him in the founding of the Norwegian Society for "the encouragement of nationalism in literature and art," and especially for the support of Norwegian dramatic art. Bjornson became president of the society and Ibsen, vice-president, and throughout the entire winter it served as a gathering place for all sorts of people with national interests, entertaining each other with speeches, conversation, and music. Ibsen spent the rest of his life, living down this one lapse into society-founding.

The faith and courage that dwelt in Björnson became a source of strength to Ibsen. When on December 23, 1859, a son was born to the Ibsens, Björnson was sponsor to him. The child was given the name of Sigurd after the hero of the drama written during the engagement of Henrik and Susannah Ibsen.

A little more than three years later, at a music festival held in Bergen, these two friends met again. Björnson had just returned from a three-year trip abroad and he had a warm greeting for Ibsen. During his absence, Ibsen had produced both his "King Sverre" and his "Lame Hulda" at the Christiania Norwegian Theater, and he was the first to point out to the Norwegian people the beautiful art which is exemplified in "Sigurd Slembe." Björnson was so grateful for this that his heart was just filled with true devotion for his friend and he tried to dispel the current rumor that he and Ibsen were rivals. Even Ibsen himself was surprised at this display of affection and was deeply moved by it. Never before or after had he yielded himself so completely and unresistingly to any man as he now did to Björnson. It made a strong impression and filled him with new ambition.

At a banquet held shortly after this occurrence, Björnson discussed directly the relation between himself and Ibsen. While he was talking about the need for a national song, he brought out the point that some-

times one poet might even be used as a weapon against another. He said, "Have I not experienced that my friend Ibsen has been placed over against me for the purpose of disparaging me, and I against him, to disparage him? Instead of this attitude we must have reconciliation and union, and to the attainment of these, song must be an aid." The speech was followed by the song which Ibsen had written for the occasion, an incident in which the two poets seemed to clasp hands before all the world.

It was through the influence of Björnson that Ibsen found a new publisher, Hegel, in Copenhagen, who published his works in editions worthy of the poet, paid him royalties that eliminated poverty from him, and became his life-long devoted friend.

After the completion of "The Pretenders," a play in which Björnson became the model for King Haakon, there was an order in council to give Ibsen 400 specie-dollars for foreign travel. Since this amount was inadequate, it was Björnson who induced his friends to make it possible for Ibsen to set out. And when "Brand" appeared, Björnson again aroused such interest in Ibsen's behalf that the government granted him a poet's pension. Was this not a proof of genuine friendship!

"But while he thus helped Ibsen, he felt at the same time that

he ought to give him good advice; he tried to influence Ibsen, the man whose very religion it was to 'be himself!' He wrote to Ibsen that the poet ought to avoid the particular, the special case, and deal only with the general, 'express feelings and thoughts that can find an echo in the hearts of millions.' Such advice must have infuriated the individualistic and undemocratic Ibsen; yet gratitude forbade him to speak his mind freely, though he probably thought his full share! It is for this reason that there appears to be something strained, almost hysterical in the assurances of gratitude and friendship sent by Ibsen to his slightly meddlesome benefactor.

"There were other causes too that made a deep friendship like that between Goethe and Schiller impossible with the two great Scandinavian poets. Björnson was full of the milk of human kindness, but a bit indiscreet in his manner of searching for the hidden sentiments and emotions in the hearts of his friends; Ibsen, on the contrary, was like the skold in 'The Pretenders,' he did not care to bare his innermost feelings. He was frequently drawn toward the darker sides of life, while to Björnson much that Ibsen wrote appeared extremely morbid. The lusty Björnson fetl that Brand was in every way his opposite, while Ibsen had much of the ascetic about him. Therefore, it seems natural that the two men should have drifted when there was no longer the Norse

'cause' to hold them together."

The cause for their drifting was due to both political and personal reasons. Björnson was heartily in favor of the liberal party of Norway, the very party which Ibsen held in abomination. Ibsen was strongly opposed to the idea of being considered a party-poet and he thought Björnson should have the same attitude. Then again, when Björnson upbraided him for accepting decorations, which he considered to be undemocratic, Ibsen sent him a sharp reply defending himself by saying that it was hypocritical and vain on the part of those who refused such decorations from governments who were granting them stipends.

After several years of estrangement between the two poets, an advance was made on the part of Ibsen. He sent him a copy of his new play, "The Pillars of Society," and on his calling card which he enclosed, he wrote:

> "To Björnstjerne Bjornseon:
> Your words on the occasion of George Brandes's departure have given me joy and deeply affected me. In them you are entirely yourself. Would you be disposed to receive the enclosed book from me and give it to your wife?
> Munich, October 28th, 1877 H. I."

Björnson did not answer; evidently their views were as yet incompatible.

In 1879 in answer to Björnson's wish that Ibsen should join him

1. A.E.Zucker, Ibsen - The Master Builder, p.122

in his demand for a"pure"flag, he wrote in this severe tone: "There do not exist in the whole of Norway twenty-five free and independent personalities. Let the Union sign remain; but take the monkhood sign out of the minds; take out the sign of prejudice, narrow-mindedness and wrong-headed notions, dependence, and the belief in groundless authority, so that individuals may come to sail under their own flag. The one they are now sailing under is neither pure nor their own."

A few months after receiving Ibsen's reply, Björnson passed through Munich. Ibsen and his family awaited with keen anticipation a visit from him but he did not come. Björnson explained his non-appearance thus: "The reason was not Ibsen's various attacks on me; they were forgotten. Not, it was the Norwegian flag that caused it! .... I had also turned to Ibsen about the matter; he was to help - I do not remember how. But I received a rebuff which wounded my patriotism.... I believe now, it was not well done; at any rate I have regretted it that I did not go to see him."

When "Ghosts" appeared and was being severely criticized, Björnson wrote an article in "Dagbladet" to defend it. This so impressed Ibsen that he said of Björnson: "He has indeed a great kingly mind,

and I shall never forget what he has done."

When Ibsen created Stockmann in "An Enemy of the People," he had both Björnson and Jonas Lie in mind. Björnson gave to this character his indomitable strength and will. He was traveling in America at the time that Ibsen was planning this play. Ibsen had him so much on his mind that each time he heard of storm or sickness, he worried about Björnson. In fact, he wrote to Björnson on March 8, 1882, "I felt that if anything should happen to you, if so great a disaster should strike our lands, then all joy of work would have departed from me." Some months later, when Björnson celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of his authorship, Ibsen wrote to him the highest praise he could give anyone: "His life was his best poem."

After a separation of twenty years the two poets met, in 1884, at Schuaz in the Tyrol, this time at Björnson's invitation. "Their similarity as well as their differences became apparent to them. Björnson knew himself to be richer, with more spaciousness in his mind, but he felt in Ibsen a tougher strength, a more unerring ability to utilize what he saw and understood, so that he - so Björnson wrote to Jonas Lie - 'gave a higher percentage, after all.' They felt that they stood together in their work, and the liberal paper 'Verdens Gang' hailed their meeting as a sign that they intended to work together for intel-

lectual progress. Ibsen was no longer the poet of the conservatives."[1]

In 1899, the National Theater in Christiania was dedicated. On its facade was hewn in stone these three names: Ibsen, Holberg, Björnson; and before the building stand bronze statues of the two men who forty years before had been instrumental in the promotion of a national Norwegian theater: Ibsen and Björnson. This was a fitting tribute to the crowning efforts of these two poets.

1. H. Koht, op.cit. pp.210, 211.

III. IBSEN'S RELATIONS WITH HIS FRIENDS

If we were to mention one predominating quality characteristic of Ibsen throughout his entire life, we would unhesitatingly say shyness. It was very difficult for him to speak his thoughts aloud or to give his confidence even to his best friends. It was more natural for him to go off by himself where it would not be necessary for him to converse with anyone.

Perhaps this is the reason that he could express himself so freely and openly in his writings. Then he did not hesitate to say what was in his mind or what he felt in his heart. He seemed like a different man entirely. It is said that he had from his mother this tendency to seek solitude, a habit which would give the poet ample time to think and to observe.

It must have grieved him many times, while talking with his best friends, that he could not talk as unreservedly as they did. He was shy; he could not reveal to them his inmost feelings. "I understand clearly," he once wrote, "that it is really only in the solitude of my own thoughts that I am myself." Therefore, that must be the real reason why he had to leave his native land to seek solitude for himself. In order to feel free he had to go away.

"Ibsen had reached the age of twenty without, as it would seem, having been able to make his inner nature audible to those around him.

He had been to the inhabitants of Grimstad a stranger within their gates, not speaking their language, or, rather, wholly 'spectral' speaking no language at all, but indulging in catcalls and grimaces. He was now discovered like Caliban, and tamed, and made vocal, by the strenuous acts of friendship. One of those who thus interpreted him was a young musician, Due, who held a post in the custom-house; the other was Ole Schulerud (1827-59), who deserves a cordial acknowledgment from every admirer of Ibsen. He was also in the receipt of custom, and a young man of small independent means. To Schulerud and to Due, Ibsen revealed his poetic plans, and he seems to have found in them both sympathizers with his republican enthusiasms and transcendental schemes for the liberation of the peoples. It was a stirring time, in 1848, and all generous young blood was flowing fast in the same direction.

"Since Ibsen's death, Due has published a very lively paper of recollections of the old Grimstad days."[1]

When Ibsen arrived in Christiania in March 1850, he shared the room of Old Schulerud and his board. They were both attending a Latin school, sometimes called "the Student Factory," to prepare themselves for taking a degree. Other prominent students enrolled at the school at that time were Björnson, Vinje, and Jonas Lie.

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1. Edmund Gosse, Henrik Ibsen, pp. 21, 22.

It seems strange that these students, who were later to become the literary leaders, should meet and become friends at this time, though there was a difference in their ages. Aasmund O. Vinje, who had been a village schoolmaster, was a peasant from Thelemark, and now at the age of thirty-two, he was studying at the University. Vinje was the founder of the movement for writing exclusively in Norwegian dialect. That Ibsen formed Björnson's acquaintance during this period seems to be proved from the fact that on May 29,1850, they both signed a protest against the deportation of a Danish revolutionist, Harro Harring, the editor of "Folkets Röst." This protest was a cry for freedom in which it must have been natural for Ibsen to join.

"It was while Ibsen was living in Rome that he was strongly attracted to the young Swedish lyrical poet, Count Carl Snoilsky, then the hope and already even the glory of his country. There was some quaint diversity between the rude and gloomy Norwegian dramatist, already middle-aged, and the full-blooded, sparkling Swedish diplomatist of twenty-three, rich, flattered, and already as famous for his fashionable 'bonnes fortunes' as Byron. But two things Snoilsky and Ibsen had in common, a passionate enthusiasm for their art, and a rebellious attitude towards their immediate precursors in it. Each,

in his own way, was the leader of a new school. The friendship of Ibsen and Snoilsky was a permanent condition for the rest of their lives, for it was founded on a common basis."[1]

During his sojourn in Germany Ibsen had few friends until 1887, when "Ghosts" appeared on the stage. Among his supporters Otto Brahm and Paul Schlenther come first.

Otto Brahm (1855-1912) had received his first training in the theater at Hamburg. He was a student twenty-two years old when in 1878 he went to one of the small theaters in Berlin and saw "Pillars of Society." He himself tells how he was irresistibly drawn to Ibsen.

"It happened one day that we (Brahm himself and Schlenther) found ourselves in the tiny Stadt theater in the Lindenstrasse at the presentation of 'The Pillars of Society.' Immediately, we experienced the first foreboding of a new poetic world; we felt for the first time placed before people of our day, whom we could accept. And out of a comprehensive social critique of the present, we beheld the ideals of freedom and truth triumphantly arise as the pillars of society. From that moment on we were disciples of the new realistic art, and our aesthetic interests had found their subject."[2]

Both Brahm and Schlenther helped prepare the staging of "Ghosts" in Berlin, which proved to be both a shock and a triumph. Two days

1. Edmund Gosse, op.cit., pp.43, 44

2. William Henri Eller, Ibsen in Germany, pp. 50, 51.

later at a great banquet held for Ibsen at which all the foremost members of literary Berlin were present, Otto Brahm pronounced Ibsen to be the great leader and pioneer in present-day drama, the bold proclaimer of truth and the poet-realist who was to help the German theater out of the flat French technique and into real life.

Paul Schlenther gives us his impression of Ibsen during the staging of "Pillars of Society":

" 'Our youthful eyes were opened to the prevalent tinsel and artificiality of the theatres. We trembled and rejoiced. We visited the theater time and gain; and we could sit all day reading the play in Wilhelm Lange's miserable translation. Neither the prosy and stiff German nor the wooden impersonation of the actors in the suburban theater could vitiate the power of the drama. That was the way that, ninety years earlier, Schiller's 'Love and Intrigue' must have affected the young, though no longer immature, generation.... This play ('The Pillars of Society') taught us to love Ibsen, to admire him for life. I may acknowledge for many of my contemporaries, as well as for myself, that it was the influence of this modern realistic work, at a decisive period in our development, which determined the tendency of our taste for the rest of our lives. We who had grown up under the educative influence of the greatest genius in the field of political realism

(Realpolitik) here come upon the most vigorous literary realism (Reel-literatur). Out of the affairs of everyday existence, out of business and labor, we saw an art arise, which impressed us more and more profoundly as the imitators of Schiller and romanticism continued to satisfy us less. It was a joy to live as long as Schiller and Goethe were writing, it was a joy to live as long as romanticism flourished, now again it was a joy to live, for there was living with us a poet who had the strength and the courage to deal with the problems and interests of our day.' "

On March 6th, 1870, Ibsen wrote to Dr. George Brandes, his friend and critic:-

"....You say that you have no friends at home. That is what I have fancied for a long time. When a man stands, as you do, in a close personal relation to his life-work, he cannot really expect to keep his friends...Friends are a costly luxury, and when one invests one's capital in a vocation or a mission in life, one cannot afford to have friends. The expensiveness of friendship does not lie in what one does for one's friends, but in what one, out of regard for them, leaves undone. This means the crushing of many an intellectual germ. It is an experience that I have gone through, and consequently I have to look back on a number of years during which it was not possible for me to be myself."

1. William Henri Eller, op.cit., pp.51, 52

And so Ibsen who considered friends a costly luxury did not devote much of his time to them. While he was in Rome, he had the habit every evening to visit the Café Avanjo. It is said that many Germans would greet him, but not stop to speak with him. He always sat alone - alone but in the company of his thoughts. Yet the few friends he had played an important part in the progress of his productions.

IV. IBSEN'S USE OF THE SOLILOQUY

In "Brand" we have the best example of Ibsen's use of the soliloquy. In this five-act play, Brand the hero, by his many soliloquies, lets the reader into the secrets of his soul.

Brandes says of this play - "Ibsen has conjured up a spirit that he himself is powerless to control. He makes Brand the mouthpiece for so many thoughts for the truth of which he himself wishes to vouch, that one receives from his work the impression that he is crying out to the world: 'I feel that in all this there must be a mistake but where it really lies I am not able to make clear either to myself or to others.' For this reason the last words of the poem carry with them no conviction; for Brand has beaten every objection out of the field, and has already admirably refuted the charge which meets him at the moment of his death, the charge of not having understood that God is love. For this reason an attack on Brand transforms itself all too easily into an attack on the poet, who has not let his protagonist meet either a hero who was truer, or an irony that was stronger, than himself."[1]

At the verybeginning of the play, after Brand's meeting with the peasant and his son, he seems somewhat disgusted for he couldn't be of any spiritual help to them. We get an inkling of his character

1. George Brandes, op. cit., p. 24

and mission as he speaks these words alone:

"But help is idle for the man
Who nothing wills but what he can.
Ah life! Ah life! Why art thou then
So passing sweet to mortal men?
In every weakling's estimation
His own life does as grossly weigh
As if the load of man's salvation
Upon his puny shoulders lay.
For every burden he's prepared,
God help us, - so his life be spared!" [1]

The next time that Brand speaks alone he is recalling scenes of his childhood.

Again we get an insight into the priest's life, when he says to himself:-

"I see my Call! It gleams ahead
Like sunshine through a loop-hold shed!
I know my task; these demons slain,
The sick Earth shall grow sound again;-
Once let them to the grave be given,
The fever fumes of Earth shall fly!
Up, soul, array thee! Sword from thigh!
To battle for the heirs of Heaven!" [2]

In Act II when Brand soliloquizes, he once more reveals his purpose to us, in saying:-

"I have boldly dared to plan
The refashioning of Man,-
There's my work,- Sin's image grown,
Whom God moulded in His own.-
Forth! to wider fields away!
Here's no room for battle-play!" [3]

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1. Vol.III. Brand, p.11
2. Ibid., p.36
3. Ibid., p.59

The same is true later on in the same act, for after Brand hears of his mother's dying without repenting, he feels it his duty to make atonement. He says:

"Impenitent alive, and dead!
This is the finger of the Lord!
Now through my means shall be restored
The treasure she has forfeited;
Else tenfold woe upon my head!
Henceforth as by my sonship bound,
Unflinching, on my native ground
I'll battle, a soldier of the cross,
For Spirit's gain by Body's loss.
Me with His purging fire the Lord
Hath arm'd, and with His riving word:
Mine is that Will and that strong Trust
That crumbles mountains into dust!" [1]

We get a different picture of Brand in the next act, It is Christmas Eve and he and his wife Agnes have just been conversing. The latter still feels keenly the loss of their son but is endeavoring to be brave in preparing to celebrate Christmas. When she leaves the room, Brand prays:-

"Lord, to her poor strength add Thine;-
Be the cruel task not mine
At Thy bidding to unchain
Angry vultures of the Law,
Swift to swoop, with ravening maw
And her heart's warm blood to drain!
I have strength to stand the strain.
Twofold agony let me bear -
But be merciful to her." [2]

We learn of Brand's own feelings towards his son's death when he says these words:-

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1. Vol.III.p.112
2. Ibid.,p.136

"My little child, lamb without stain;
Thou for my mother's deed wast slain;
A shatter'd spirit bore His voice
Whose throne the crested heavens sustain
And bade me cast the die of choice.
And this distracted soul had birth
Because my mother's clan to earth.
Thus the Lord, sowing fruit of crime,
Reaps retribution in His time,
And, reaching down from His high dome,
Strikes the third generation home." [1]

Brand sincerely believes that the boy's life had to be taken because of his mother's sin. Yet he doesn't blame God, but on the otherhand, he goes on to say that "God is above all things just." When death comes to little Alf, Brand feels a certain ecstasy for he realizes or believes that his mother's sin has been expiated but, he says the darkness is deeper than before and calls to Agnes for light.

The next example of monologue is given by Agnes. As she decks the room for the Christmas festivities, she is reminded of her little boy and his acts of a year ago. Here we have a scene with a "heart interest." We, too, see the child stretching forth his tiny hand, and almost hear him asking his questions. Then we shudder when Agnes says to herself:-

"How bright the glow
It seems as though the sundering wall
Had sunk; the low room grown a hall,
The murky world of ice and snow
Sudden become a shelter'd nest,
Where cosily my child may rest." [2]

1.Vol.III. p.156
2.Ibid.,p.159

The next time we hear Agnes speaking to herself, she seems to rebel at fate. Brand has forbidden her to unbolt the window, and she feels so alone and pent up. She says that even God is busy and is listening to only songs of praise and blessing and is not mindful to a mother's need. But she soon rejoices in the fact that Alf is in a place where there is gladness and where there is light. She concludes these words with taking from a cupboard some baby clothes.

Then follows the scene where the Woman enters with a child, and she asks Agnes for her boy's clothes. Agnes is unwilling at first to part with Alf's garments, then she reluctantly parts with some of them. In the end she gladly parts with all and by so doing feels herself free. She then bids her husband good-night after the Woman has departed, and this act closes with Brand's clenching his hands against his breast and uttering:-

> "Soul, be patient in thy pain!
> Triumph in its bitter cost.
> All to lost was all to gain;
> Nought abideth but the Lost!"[1]

A year and a half passes when Act Fifth opens. The new Church stands complete, and adorned for consecration. Agnes has departed from this earth and Brand in his loneliness feels that his work has been in vain. Though the people say the church is vast, yet he feels

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1.Vol.III.p.178

disappointed. Has his purpose in building a House of God been fulfilled? He is asking himself:-

"The thing I will'd,
Is it in this House fulfill'd?
Can the rushing fire of passion
That begot it here be stilled?
Was the Temple of this fashion
That I dream'd should overspan
All the Misery of Man?
Ah, had Agnes stay'd with me,
Not thus vainly had I striven!
Small things greatly she could see,
From doubt's anguish set me free,
Clasp together Earth and Heaven
Like the green roof of the tree." [1]

As he observes the preparations for the festival, he feels he is in darkness and prays to be cast into oblivion. It is hard for the reader to comprehend why Brand should be so cast down. His feeling of disappointment upon the completion of the task which he had set out to do reminds us of the Master Builder Solness. He, too, after completing his church, felt a certain disappointment and decided to build no more churches. We are reminded, also, of the artist Rubek in "When We Dead Awaken." After completing his masterpiece, he considers himself a failure. Quoting from Weigand, "To Irene he (Rubek) says that he has created no poems in marble, just pottered around, since she left him. To Maia he confesses that after his great group stood complete, he no longer loved his own work. Men's laurels and incense nauseated him, till he felt like rushing away in despair and hiding himself in the depths of the woods. Can it be possible that Rubek's doubt reflects a similar despondency gnawing

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1. Vol.III, p.191

at Ibsen's heart, as he contemplates his own life work?" [1]

As Brand stands alone before the new Church, we sympathize with him again in his loneliness as he cries out:-

> "O Agnes, why wast thou so frail?
> Would that this hollow game were done,
> Where none give in, and none prevail -
> Yes,hopeless he that fights alone!" [2].

This same feeling of being alone prevails throughout the remainder of the play. He leaves the church with some followers, but they are influenced to leave him. Gerd is the last to leave him, and after she has thrown herself down in the snow, Brand's last words were:-

> "God, I plunge into death's night-
> Shall they wholly miss thy Light
> Who unto man's utmost might
> Will d -?" [3].

Then an avalanche buries him.

Heller says of Brand: "Undeniably there is an inconsistency in Brand, a veritable break in his ethics; the fight against unfreedom of opinion and conduct is led by a stubborn absolutist. A man with a fixed idea becomes invariably an enemy of society, if he would force his purpose, be it never so pure, upon an unready and unwilling community. Brand's fixed idea is the omnipotence of will-power in the true follower of Christ.---- It is doubly unfortunate for him that his variety of religion happens to be harsh and hard, an icy northern Puritanism whose revolting cruelty is fully brought out in

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1.Hermann J.Weigand, The Modern Ibsen, p.403
2.Vol.III, p.197
3.Idem.,p.262

the test. His fanatical over-righteousness carries blight and misery to his human destinies, and martyrizes all that are near to him, his mother, his only child, and his self-sacrificing wife whom he has treated as a tool, - as a gauge, namely of his own progress in saintly renunciation.

"Brand is disheartened and demoralized by the fruitlessness of his endeavors and the desertion of his flock. Unlike Stockmann, who maintains that 'the strongest man is he who fights alone,' Brand, in the course of events, bursts out twice in the despairing cry:- 'Hopeless is he that fights alone!'

"The play ends properly with Brand's utter desolation, agony, and death.....Brand's life was a total failure because he, a priest, had not acknowledged the God of Love. He failed and perished because of his Old Testmanet belief that the Lord is a wrathful and jealous God, and his idiosyncrasy that voluntary martyrdom is the sole divine test of Faith." [1]

Now let us consider Ibsen's use of the soliloquy in his play, "The Doll's House." The first example of this occurs after Nora's conversation with Krogstad, who had called to impress upon her the significance of her committing forgery and to get her to use her influence with her husband in his behalf.

1.Otto Heller, Henrik Ibsen - Plays and Problems, pp.72,73.

Quoting from Weigand: "After Krogstad's departure, Nora's abrupt fragments of Monologue (a device to the use of which Ibsen returns freely in this drama) gives us hints as to what is going on in her mind. 'No, it's impossible! Why, I did it for love!' She murmurs to herself, as she takes up one piece of work after another in the effort to divert her mind from the hateful business. Evidently she is trying to fortify herself against doubts that the law may not be altogether as she represented it to Krogstad. Then, as she trims the Christmas tree, we catch another glimpse, this time more clearly, of her mental processes: 'That horrible man! Nonsense, nonsense! there's nothing to be afraid of. The Christmas tree shall be beautiful. I'll do everything to please you, Torvald; I'll sing, and dance, and--' The meaning of that concluding sentence is unmistakable. How Torvald is going to take the disclosure worries her; she is thinking of ways and means, to diminish the force of the tempest that is bound to break." [1]

When Act Second opens, we find Nora in a very restless state. After assuring herself that the mail box is empty, that Krogstad has not yet carried out his threat of exposure, she exclaims: "Stuff and nonsense! Of course he won't really do anything. Such a thing, couldn't happen. It's impossible! Why, I have three little children." [2]

1. Hermann J.Weigand, op.cit.,p.38
2. Vol.VII. p.62

Again quoting from Weigand: "What couldn't happen? we ask, puzzled by the peculiar cogency of the argument that she has three little children. What can it mean, save that she fears they will put her in jail? Any doubt on this point is removed when at the sound of footsteps in the hall, we hear her scream: 'Ah, they come.' Hoe relieved she is when instead of a whole detachment of police, it is only Christina!"[1].

After Christina leaves the room, Nora is told by her husband that he has written the letter which will result in Krogstad's dismissal from the bank. Noting her anxiety, Helmer says, "Let what will happen - when it comes to the pinch, I shall have strength and courage enough. You shall see; my shoulders are broad enough to bear the whole burden."

"Nora. (Terror struck) What do you mean by that?

Helmer. The whole burden, I say -

Nora. (With decision) That you shall never, never do!

Helmer. Very well; then we'll share it, Nora, as man and wife. That is how it should be."[2].

"For Torvald these words were merely an exercise in self-expression, a pleasurable rehearsal of the heroic attitude in the face of a wholly imaginary danger. Little Nora, however, her mind filled

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1. Hermann J.Weigand, op.cit.,p.41
2. Vol.VII. p.78

with a horribly concrete danger, had felt their impact with the force of a thunderbolt. After Torvald has retired to his office, she stands as though rooted to the ground, bewildered with terror, and whispers: 'He would do it. Yes, he would do it. He would do it, in spite of all the world. No, never that, never, never! Anything rather than that! Oh, for some way of escape!' We divine Nora's thoughts. Snatching at Torvald's words, she reads into them the assurance that if the worst comes to the worst, her husband - hero will shoulder the responsibility for her indiscretion. And this thought, scarcely conceived, becomes a conviction on which she fastens with the whole passionate ardor of her will-to-believe. It moves into the focus of her imaginings as the miracle, at once longed for and dreaded."[1].

Nora realizes she is doomed when the maid announces Krogstad. Before he appears, she utters: "It is coming! The dreadful thing is coming, after all. No, no, no, it can never be, it shall not!"[2].

Krogstad can not be turned from his purpose in informing Helmer of Nora's crime and avers that before a year is out he shall be the manager's right hand. Though Nora hints of committing suicide, that does not effect Krogstad. He has the letter all written for Helmer to read.

1.Hermann J.Weigand, op.cit.,p.45
2.Vol.VII.p.91

Nora utters a suppressed shriek when Krogstad, on leaving drops the letter into the mail-box. "There it lies.- Torvald, Torvald- now we are lost!"[1]

Will Nora commit suicide? we ask ourselves. The act closes with Nora whispering to herself: "Five. Seven hours till midnight. Then twenty-four hours till the next midnight. Then the tarentella will be over. Twenty-four and seven? Thirty-one hours to live."[2] What anguish she is experiencing!

Late that evening Helmer takes the letter from the box - after he has just said to his wife, "Do you know, Nora, I often wish some danger might threaten you, that I might risk body and soul, and everything, everything, for your dear sake."[3]

Nora, after her husband goes into his room with the letters, with wild eyes, gropes about her, seizes Helmer's domino, throws it round her, and whispers quickly, hoarsely,and brokenly: "Never to see the children again. Never, never.- Oh that black, icy water! Oh that bottomless-! If it were only over! Now he has it; he's reading it. Oh, no, no, no, not yet. Torvald, good-bye-! Good-bye, my little ones - !"[4]

When Helmer reenters the room in indignant rage, we are assured that the miracle is not going to happen. Helmer is not going to take

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1. Vol.VII. p.98
2. Ibid.,p.109
3. Ibid.,p.133
4. Ibid.,p.134

Nora's guilt upon himself!

Strange to say, it is Helmer who utters the last soliloquy in the play. After Nora has left the room, he sinks into a chair by the door with his face in his hands: "Nora! Nora! (He looks around and rises) Empty! She is gone. (A hope springs up in him) Ah! The miracle of miracles -?! (From below is heard the reverberation of a heavy door closing.

V. PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF IBSEN AS SHOWN IN HIS PLAYS

In pointing out the personal experiences of Ibsen as shown in his plays, let us first consider "The Pretenders," one of his earliest productions. The principal characters in this drama are King Haakon and Earl Skule.

Earl Skule is identified with Ibsen himself while King Haakon represents Björnson, his more fortunate competitor. Björnson was gaining ground all the time, going from one success to another, and being recognized throughout all Scandinavia. Ibsen, though five years older, was passing through a depressing period of struggle, suffering from obscurity, poverty, and lack of appreciation. Circumstances seemed to be against him. He himself said in writing to a friend, "The fact that everyone was against me, that I no longer had anyone outside the nearest of whom I could say that he believed in me, must, as you will readily see, call forth a mood which found release in 'The Pretenders.' "

As these two men, then, are striving for leadership in the literary world, so in this drama, King Haakon and Earl Skule are contending for political leadership. Haakon, because of his royal birth, is made king and to him Ibsen attributes splendid kingly qualities. He characterizes him as far superior to Skule who is a despondent, distrustful, and unhappy rival.

Perhaps Ibsen had doubt in himself and in his calling which may have

caused him to write this dialog in the fourth act of the play:-

"King Skule. Tell me, Jatgeir, how came you to be a skald? Who taught you skaldcraft?

"Jatgeir. Skaldcraft cannot be taught, my lord.

"King Skule. Cannot be taught? How came it then?

"Jatgeir. The gift of sorrow came to me,and I was a skald.

"King Skule. Then 'tis the gift of sorrow the skald has need of?

"Jatgeir. I needed sorrow;others there may be who need faith, or joy - or doubt -

"King Skule. Doubt as well?

"Jatgeir. Ay; but then must the doubted be strong and sound.

"King Skule. And whom call you the unsound doubter?

"Jatgeir. He who doubts of his own doubt."

Therefore, if Ibsen had doubts of his vocation, he overcame them in his own splendid way and marched on to victory.

Ibsen gives to Solness, the builder in his drama, "The Master Builder," a personal attribute. He gives him the same weakness that he had himself, dizziness caused from looking down from great heights. In this same play Ibsen brought out questions that occupied his own mind, as secret powers in people. Could an unexpressed wish be translated into a deed by another? We note the power that Hilda had over Solness.

Vol. II. p.260

In Ibsen's last play, "When We Dead Awaken," there is a similarity between Rubeck and the author. Ibsen had now reached the age of seventy-one and so much of himself is reflected in the character of Rubeck. They were both artists, Ibsen a dramatist, and Rubeck a sculptor. They have spent so much time abroad where they have won fame and honor, that when they return to their native land, Norway, they have great difficulty in adjusting themselves. They feel so out of sympathy with their surroundings and fellow countrymen.

In the very beginning of the play perhaps we hear Ibsen speaking:-

"Professor Rubeck. (With a searching glance.) You don't seem particularly glad to be at home again, Maia!

"Maia. (Looks at him.) Are you glad?

"Professor Rubeck. (Evasively.) I - ?

"Maia. Yes, you, who have been so much further away than I. Are you entirely happy, now that you are at home again?

"Professor Rubeck. No - to be quite candid - perhaps not entirely happy -

"Maia. (With animation) There, you see! Didn't I know it!

"Professor Rubeck. I have perhaps been too long abroad. I have drifted quite away from all this - this home life! "

Time and time again Ibsen had felt himself misunderstood. We have

1. Vol. XI, pp.336,337

said that he couldn't reveal his innermost thoughts even to his friends, and so he believed that the people in general didn't fully understand him. Rubek may then be speaking for the writer:-

"Professor Rubeck. When I had finished this masterpiece of mine - (Makes a passionate movement with his hand) - for "The Resurrection Day" is a masterpiece! Or was one in the beginning. No, it is one still. It must, must be a masterpiece!

"Maia. (Looks at him in astonishment.) Why, Rubeck - all the world knows that.

"Professor Rubeck. (Short, repellently.) All the world knows nothing! Understands nothing!

"Maia. Well, at any rate it can derive something.

"Professor Rubeck. Something that isn't there at all, yes. Something that never was in my mind. Oh, yes, that they can all go into ecstasies over! (Growling to himself.) What is the good of working oneself to death for the mob and the masses - for 'all the world' !"[1]

When we consider how Ibsen overcame the struggle with poverty and other obstacles that persistently fronted him, and finally reached fame, polularity, and prosperity, we wonder if his happiness wasn't hard-earned.

Again, he may have Rubeck reveal his own thoughts:-

"Professor Rubeck. I am happy, Maia. Really happy - in a way. (Short

1. Vol. XI, p.329

silence.) For after all there is a certain happiness in feeling oneself free and independent on every hand - in having at one's command everything one can possibly wish for - all outward things, that is to say. Do you not agree with me, Maia?"

Yes, how well Ibsen knew what it meant to be both dependent and independent!

In the drama, "John Gabriel Borkman," Borkman, his wife, and her sister, all had a purpose and ambition for young Erhart. But he evades them all and utters: "I am young! I want to live, for once in a way, as well as other people! I want to live my own life! It is happiness I must have! I want to live, live, live!" He knew nothing of life but there was that longing withing him to learn for himself what life had to offer. Did not this same cry arise from Ibsen's own sould? Now, Ibsen, as he recalls his past life to him, he feels that he has not lived. There has been a lack in his own life; he feels that loss.

1. Vol. XI, p.339

VI. IBSEN'S ATTITUDE TOWARD CERTAIN PROFESSIONS

In Ibsen's various dramas he deals with men of many professions, such as merchants, doctors, lawyers, ministers, teachers, artists, landed proprietors, shipowners, tradesmen, and manufacturers. Let us consider his attitude towards some of these different professions.

Doctors receive the most favorable treatment, for they seem to be at the head of the list. Dr. Wangel ("The Lady from the Sea") is one of his noblest and best conceptions of male character, and yet he doesn't measure up to our expectation. Dr. Herdal ("The Master Builder") receives approval from the author, and so also does Dr. Fieldbo ("The League of Youth"). Dr. Rank ("The Doll's House") commands our respect to a certain extent, for he, perhaps unconsciously, invites our sympathy. Dr. Relling ("The Wild Duck") though dissipated, is treated humanely.

Evidently Ibsen had a strong dislike towards the legal professions, for they do not appear to advantage. To my mind, one of the most selfish and cowardly characters is Torvald Helmer ("A Doll's House"). Judge Brock ("Hedda Gobler") is depicted as a vile sensualist; and Stensgaard ("The League of Youth") is an ambitious but unprincipled politician. Ibsen couldn't have had much faith in lawyers for he seemed to believe that the study of law resulted in the development of casuistry and sophistry.

Concerning teachers it is difficult to fathom what Ibsen's real conception of them was for he has them so different. He seems to treat his

women teachers with greater respect than he does the men teachers: Martha Bernick ("Pillars of Society"), Petra Stockmann ("An Enemy of the People"), and Asta Allmers ("Little Eyolf"). His men teachers are: Arnholm ("The Lady from the Sea") who was on the whole even-tempered and reliable; Alfred Allmers ("Little Eyolf") is much like Arnholm in his character. On the other hand, there is George Tesman ("Hedda Gabler") a pedantic and pettily useful individual; Adjunkt Rörlund ("Pillars of Society"), a contemptible sort of person; Rector Kroll ("Rosmersholm"), a narrow-minded pedogogue; Lövborg ("Hedda Gabler") a dissipated man, as also is Brendal ("Rosmersholm")

It is interesting to note his attitude toward the clergy. He treats that class with utter contempt. He represents nearly all of them as advocates of a narrow-minded, rigid code of morality. Pastor Strawman ("Love's Comedy") is a familiar type of clergy whose mind is more centered on material things than on spiritual things. His colleague in "Peer Gynt" is very much like him. We feel no sympathy for Pastor Manders in "Ghosts" for he reasons in such a childish and ignorant way that we get out of patience with him. Molvik ("The Wild Duck") is a degenerate sot. Brand, though an idealist, is a fanatic, wrecking his home and subjecting his wife and child to what is practically a death sentence in his pursuit of an ideal.

His sincerity becomes his worst vice. So it would seem to Ibsen that that study of theology did not lead to a pure, clean, and practical religion.

The politicians and journalists are not regarded any better. They seem to be non-dependable, self-seeking opportunists, as for example, Peter Mortensgaard ("Rosmersholm") and Hovstad ("An Enemy of the People.")

Those who became achievers of success are Torvald Helmer of the professional class, Solness, and Rubeck of the world of art, and Consul Bernick of the business class. Yet Ibsen doen not attribute to such so-called successes honesty and unselfishness. They are a self-seeking type who make use of the public in general to further their own ends, but they keep them in ignorance of their plans.

VII. HIS UTILIZATION IN LATER PLAYS OF UNDEVELOPED THEMES IN EARLIER PLAYS

In considering this subject, Ibsen's utilization in later plays of undeveloped themes in earlier plays, let us take for an example the character Nora Helmer in "The Doll's House." When Nora decides to leave her husband because she has been treated like a doll-wife, we are reminded of Selma Bratsberg in an earlier play, "The League of Youth."

In the fourth act of the play there is an outburst of revolt on the part of Selma. Up to that time little has been heard from her, for she plays an insignificant part. According to William Archer this outburst of Selma is the most original feature of the play. She suddenly complains that she has been kept like a doll and utters these words of rebuke:-

"Selma. Oh, how cruel you have been to me! Shamefully - all of you! It was my part always to accept - never to give. I have been like a pauper among you. You never came and demanded a sacrifice of me; I was not fit to bear anything. I hate you! I loathe you!

"Erik. What can this mean?

"The Chamberlain. She is ill; she is out of her mind!

"Selma. How I have thirsted for a single drop of your troubles, your anxieties! But when I begged for it you only laughed me off.

You have dressed me up like a doll; you have played with me as you would play with a child. Oh, what a joy it would have been to me to take my share in your burdens! How I longed, how I yearned for a large, and high, and strenuous part in life! Now you come to me, Erik, now that you have nothing else left. But I will not be treated simply as a last resource. I will have nothing to do with your troubles now. I won't stay with you! I will rather play and sing in the streets -!. Let me be! Let me be!"

That speech of Selma's especially in connection with her being dressed like a doll and played with as a child, contains the germ of "A Doll's House." In 1869, George Brandes remarked that the figure of Selma required more room and separate treatment; ten years after that "A Doll's House" made its appearance.

In Nora we have a young woman who has been brought up without the discipline of work and responsibilities. She has been adored by parents and other admirers, so that now as the wife of Helmar she is treated as a delightful and entertaining child. She is a playmate to her children, while her husband in his egoism assumes all responsibilities. When she is suddenly brought face to face with a crisis, she meets her husband's plea with an unalterable decision.

1. Vol.VI, p.130

"Helmer. This is monstrous! Can you forsake your holiest duties in this way?

"Nora. What do you consider my holiest duties?

"Helmer. Do I need to tell you that? Your duties to your husband and your children.

"Nora. I have other duties equally sacred.

"Helmer. Before all else you are a wife and a mother.

"Nora. That I no longer believe. I believe that before all else I am a human being, just as much as you are - or at least that I should try to become one."[1]

These two women, Selma and Nora, differ thus:- the former becomes reconciled to her husband, while Nora leaves hers to become a human being.

In this same play, "The Doll's House," Ibsen lightly touched upon the subject of heredity. Nora has a tendency to lying and is accused by her husband of inheriting this trait from her father. When Helmer learns of Nora's guilt, he emits these stinging words:-

"Oh, what an awful awakening! During all these eight years - she who was my pride and my joy - a hypocrite, a liar - worse, worse - a criminal. Oh, the unfathomable hideousness of it all! Ugh! Ugh!

"I ought to have known how it would be. I ought to have foreseen

1. Vol. VII, p.147

it. All your father's want of principle - be silent! - all your father's want of principle you have inherited - no religion, no morality, no sense of duty. How I am punished for screening him! I did it for your sake; and you reward me like this."

Then, too, in this play, the author speaks of a disease which Dr. Rank suffers because of the sins of a guilty parent. Ibsen later enlarges upon this subject and makes it the main theme in "Ghosts." Here Oswold Alving suffers untold agony of a hereditary disease caused by the dissipations of his father. This sickness results eventually in his becoming an imbecile. When the play closes, the audience is shocked by the suggestion that a mother may have the right to take the life of her demented son.

In "The Lady from the Sea" Ibsen introduces Hilda Wangel to us and in "The Master Builder" we meet her again. In the early book there is an odd mixture to her make-up. She is likeable, gay, but very observing and somewhat precocious. She admits that shés a horrid child just for spite. She tells her sister Boletta that it would be thrilling to engage herself to the young sculptor Lyngstrand, though she knows that nothing would come of it because of his ill health, but she would have the pleasure of wearing mourning clothes. She hints at this to Lyngstrand in the last act:-

1. Vol. VII, p. 136

"Hilda. But tell me - as an artist - how do you think I should look in black?

"Lyngstrand. If you were dressed like that, Miss Hilda, I should long to be a painter - so that I might paint a young, lovely, broken-hearted widow.

"Hilda. Or a young girl mourning for her betrothed.

"Lyngstrand. Yes, that would suit you still better. But you can't wish to dress yourself like that?

"Hilda. I don't know; I think it is thrilling."[1]

Hilda doesn't feel any genuine sympathy towards Lyngstrand.

In the later book Hilda suddenly and unexpectedly appears at the home of Solness, the Master Builder, to claim the kingdom he had promised her. Ten years before, upon the completion of a church at Lysanger, the builder Solness notices Hilda among "the white-frocked little devils." He was pleased with her enthusiasm and admiration and gave her a kiss with some light promises. In recalling this incident to Solness, Hilda says, "It was so wonderfully thrilling to stand below and look up at you. Fancy, if he should fall over! He - the master builder himself." She is the same Hilda as in "The Lady of the Sea", only more cruel. She works on his vanity to get Solness to do her bidding. She implored him to climb to the top of

1. Vol. IX, p.337

his house, and when he reaches the pinnacle, she says, "So I have seen him all through these ten years. How secure he stands! Frightfully thrilling all the same. Look at him! Now he is hanging the wreath round the vane!"[1]

But it is her jubilant shout uttered heedless of every warning that results in the builder's falling to the ground - crushed. So Hilda becomes"thrilled" but at the price of the Master Builder's life.

"An Enemy of the People" was a direct outcome of vicious personal attacks on Ibsen himself. For the first time the author brings out his aristocratic principles, which do not exclude a friendly feeling towards the people in general. Up to this time he has not so forcefully expounded the doctrine that the majority is always in the wrong. Ibsen speaks himself from his own experience, when he has Dr. Stockmann say: "The strongest man in the world is he who stands (most) alone."

1. Vol. X, p.362

VII. IBSEN'S DOCTRINE OF INDIVIDUALISM

When Ibsen had Dr. Stockmann declare in his play, "An Enemy of the People," "The strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone," he is speaking for himself. He believed in the individual as Dr. Stockmann did. When the latter believed that he was in the right, he was ready to fight his cause to the utmost, even though it meant fighting alone. By doing so, he was bringing out and developing all the possibilities within him. He was utilizing his own abilities to further his plans.

In a letter written to Dr. Brandes in 1871, Ibsen says in part: "Now reason does not imperatively demand that the individual should be a citizen. Far from it. The State is the curse of the individual ... away with the State!" He believed that the only justifiable basis for union in a community is voluntary choice and mental compatibility and spiritual sympathy on the part of those who unite in this community.

Concerning marriage Ibsen's doctrine of individualism is very distinct in his drama "The Doll's House" when Nora refuses to recognize her duties. Helmer is astounded when Nora tells him that she must leave him. He says:-

"To forsake your home, your husband, and your children! And you don't consider what the world will say.

"Nora. I can pay no heed to that. I only know that I must do it.

"Helmer. This is monstrous! Can you forsake your holiest duties in this way?

"Nora. What do you consider my holiest duties?

"Helmer. Do I ne d to tell you that? Your duties to your husband and your children.

"Nora. I have other duties equally sacred.

"Helmer. Impossilbe! What duties do you mean?

"Nora. My duties towards myself.

"Helmer. Before all else you are a wife and a mother.

"Nora. That I no l nger believe. I believe that b fore all else I am a human being just as much as you are - or at least I should try to become one."[1]

Thus Ibsen shows us that it was essential for Nora to develop her individuality for her own good. She felt she had to leave her husband in order to become a human being. She sensed the urge within her to be her whole self, with no concessions.

Again, Ibsen's idea of individualism is conveyed in these words of Brand when he says:-

1. Vol. VII, p. 147

"But from these scraps and from these shreds,
These headless hands and handless heads,
These torso-stumps of soul and thought,
A man complete and whole shall grow,
And God His glorious child shall know,
His heir, the Adam that He wrought!"

To Brand there was no compromising. What a contrast there is in Brand's conception of the individual and that of the Boyg in "Peer Gynt."

"Peer. Strike back at me, can't you!

"The Voice. The Boyg isn't mad.

"Peer. Strike!

"The Voice. The Boyg strikes not.

"Peer. Fight! You shall!

"The Voice. The great Boyg conquers, but does not fight.

"Peer. Were there only a nixie here that could prick me!

Were there only as much as a year-old troll!

Only something to fight with. But here there is nothing -

Now he's snoring! Boyg!

"The Voice. What's your will?

"Peer. Use force!

"The Voice. The great Boyg conquers in all things without it." [2]

The Boyg has not the will to resist and fight but is the personification of cowardice.

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1. Vol. III, p.26
2. Vol. IV, pp.85, 86

Dr. Lee Hollander in his introduction to Ibsen's "Speeches and Letters" says:-

"If for all that Ibsen's philosophy in his later speeches strikes us today as essentially sound and thoroughly practical, it is because it is felt to grow nationally out of the central idea pervading all his life work, his uncompromising individualism. To him, the only salvation to be hoped for lies in the individual working out his own life to the utmost limit of possibility, in his being true to himself. It is his own matter to steer between the Scylla of "Brand", and the Charybdis of 'Peer Gynt.' The main thing ever is that the individual becomes roused and asserts his sacred innate rights over against the usurpations of the state, of his supposed duties, of the conventions of society."[1]

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1. Arne Kildal, Speeches and New Letters of Henrik Ibsen, The Introduction, p.36

IX. HIS DEVELOPMENT - THE VARIOUS STAGES - ROMANTIC, REALISTIC, MYSTICAL

During his early years, Ibsen wrote romantic plays, in his middle life, realistic plays, and in his old age he wrote mystical plays. "Brand" is an excellent example of the romantic type.

"Ibsen's strength lies in the problem-play, the most precious of the many acquisitions of literary individualism. Ibsen's poetic zeal is to be himself, to annihilate entirely all foreign influences upon him, to pursue his own originality without restraint. His human zeal, therefore, becomes a disdain of all outside authority, and an acknowledgement of that truth only, he himself has realized. The summum bonum is to be one's self. Its first literary exposition is 'Brand.'

"Brand is the renunciation of his poetry from all dependence and imitation. Brand is a burning passion with which Ibsen overcomes inherited preconception and attains to liberty. Ibsen evades no sacrifice, however great, to attain a unity of life and will. In Brand Ibsen is for the first time a modern man.

"Brand is the modern will. Peer Gynt is the individualistic will, also at enmity with half-living and thinking. Peer Gynt is the protest versus the romantic spirit, which though it disdains active ex-

istence, accepts the practice of bourgeoisie cowardice as the theory of all human existence. The bourgeoisie reconciled the discrepancy between ideality and reality by disposing of them as incompatible, separate sovereigns.

"The problem-play is the ultimate expression of the romantic spirit. In it lies Ibsen's efficiency and talent. His keen perception of modern conditions, however, directed him to turn from romanticism. By so doing he betrayed his talent to realize his perceptions. To conciliate these opposing forces was the problem of his life, at the same time, the problem of modern literature. Ibsen stands, therefore, at the threshold of the new literature; he is, therefore, the champion of the contemporary desire to synthesize romanticism and naturalism. Therein rests his significance."[1]

"The Wild Duck," "Ghosts," and "The Doll's House" are all examples of the realistic type of play. Brandes says of Ibsen at this time, "Thus we see him who, like nearly all the older living writers, at first stood waist-deep in the romantic period, work himself out of it and up from it, by degrees become more and more modern, and at last the most modern of the modern. This, I am convinced is his imperishable glory, and will give lasting life to his works. For the modern is not the ephemeral, but the flame of life itself, the

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1. William Henri Eller, op.cit., pp. 90, 91

vital spark, the soul of an age.

"The disapproval which 'Ghosts' awakened in many circles, and the vulgar criticism of which it was made the object, will certainly not restrain Ibsen's productive instinct, but at the moment it discouraged him.

"The storm raised by 'Ghosts' could have no other effect than that of strengthening him in his conviction of the foolishness of the great majority."[1]

In a letter written on January 3rd, 1882, to Dr. Brandes, Ibsen states: "Björnson says:- 'The majority is always right;' and as a practical politician he is bound, I suppose to say so. I, on the contrary, must of necessity say, 'The minority is always right.' Naturally I am not thinking of that minority of stagnationists who are left behind by the great middle party, which with us is called Liberal; but I mean that minority which leads the van, and pushes on to points which the majority has not yet reached."

Eller, in referring to "The Wild Duck," says, "The characterization of little Hedvig is a masterpiece. Every word has been reproduced from life. And still there are oracles upon critical tripods who maintain that Ibsen is not a realist. If they are asked why, they reply. Because he depicts unusual conditions. As though

1. George Brandes, op.cit.,p.79

realism dared portray only commonplace people and work-a-day happenings! Realism is not dependent upon subject matter, it is determined by method."[1]

Paul Desjardins, a French critic, calls Ibsen "Un grand artiste." In referring to Ibsen's plays of this realistic period, he says, "Au premier abord, pourtant, ce qui vous frappera dans ce théâtre, c'est un air de simplicité et de natural. De petits bourgeois menant une vie fort restreinte; des maisons où le soir la lampe s'allume à l'heure où les volets se ferment, et qui sont vraiment des 'intérieurs'...(Ibsen)peint ce qu' il voit; à la façon de Matsys et des vieux maîtres flamands...c'est la vie, la vraie vie sans apprêt et sans retouches. Vous voulez du réalisme? En voilà."[2]

Ibsen advances from this realistic period to the mystical period, which are exemplified in such plays as "The Masterbuilder" and "Little Eyolf". Along with this mystic power Ibsen mixes the symbolic. Note what Eller says in regard to this:

"With almost every drama of Ibsen a mystic power rises into the world from hidden realms, which assumes life in being named, and with which we long have experienced an unconscious relationship. In 'The Masterbuilder' it is the impossible. He had once accomplished it. He had done a deed beyond the limitations of his power. This deed

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1. William Henri Eller, op.cit.,p.76
2. A.Dikka Reque, Trois Auteurs Dramatiques Skandinaves,p.58

he recalls as something fearful and superhuman, at the same time, as the momentary fulfillment of his greatest yearning. .....

"All of Ibsen's works, it is the opinion of another critic (Max Reiss) have been more or less symbolic. 'The Masterbuilder' is only thus to be understood. That man cannot himself ascend to the heights of his own building is an exquisite symbol of the world reformer, of him who re-evaluates life, who establishes in theory a new existence, which he and others cannot realize."[1]

It is interesting to read what Count Prozor, a French writer, tells us of the mystic and the symbolic of this same play:-

"Ce drame, dit-il, n'est pas une simple tentative artistique. C'est une oeuvre de courage et de sincerité. Elle n'est point difficile à comprendre, et les symboles qu'on y rencontre sont assez transparents.

"Maître Solness, c'est le poète lui-même.

"Hilda, c'est la jeunesse, et c'est aussi l'imagination qu'il est dangereux d'écouter.

"Madame Solness, c'est le passé avec sa tristesse et ses puerilités.

"Le vieux Brovik, c'est la routine que Solness a détruite.

"Le jeune Brovik, c'est l'utilitarisme moderne longtemps refoulé

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1. William Henri Fuller, op.cit.,p. 106

par l'Idéal, par l'Art, et triomphant enfin losque l'Art, entraîné sur la pente des rêves, emporté par un vent de folie, s'élance vers les nuages.

"Puis, si l'on passe aux idées, les églises que Solness construisait au début de sa carrière, ce sont les drames philosophiques, et en général, les oeuvres religieuses ou mystiques par lesquelles ont commencé tant de poètes de son pays; les demeures familiales qu'il s'est mis à bâtir plus tard, après une crise de désespérance et de révolte, ce sont les tendances humanitaires qui, à l'époque où Ibsen dans ses drames modernes, essayait de reformer la société par le théâtre, achevaient de triompher, en Scandinavie, de la vieille foi mystique. Celle-ci, en disparaissant, leur a légué le culte de l'Idéal et l'amour du Beau dont tous les mouvements sociaux de ces contrées, même le mouvement ouvrier actuel, portent invariablement l'empreinte.

"C'est ainsi que Solness donne aux demeures qu'il construit une vague apparence de temple.

"Enfin la résolution qu'il prend de ne plus jamais bâtir que des châteaux enchantés, mais de les faire reposer sur de fortes assises, symbolise la dernière évolution du génie d'Ibsen, et peut-être de celui de notre siècle.

"Ne voit-on pas, depuis quelquetemps, le goût du mystère et du rêve s'introduire peu à pen dans tous les domaines, sans que l'esprit renonce aux méthodes positives et aux procédés réalistes?"[1]

1. A.Dikke Reque, op.cit., p.93

In considering the mysticism displayed in "Little Eyolf," let us again note what Eller says:-

"The depth and intensity of the technic of 'Little Eyolf' transcends that of 'Hedda Gabler' and 'The Masterbuilder.' A mystic longing for peace is discernible in the quiet, conciliatory mood of the play. The gaze is directed 'toward the mountain peaks, the stars, the great calm.' Similar to Masterbuilder Solness, 'Little Eyolf' is self-revelatory. A hidden melancholy melody recurs; mortal man is earth bound. The idealist, whose strength of body and soul are inadequate, reels at his own idealistic demands....

"The combination of naturalism and mysticism tends to pervert the import of the play; the profound thoughts seem nonsensical, the wisdom expressed, rediculous. He who can fathom human thought and feeling as Ibsen in 'Little Eyolf' is a great philosopher. He who can disclose his discoveries as a prayer is a great poet. But to be a great dramatist, it is necessary that the author be able to incorporate the eternal in the temporal. With this demand, the drama does not comply. Moreover, 'one sentence is allegorical, the next realistic, the third symbolic.' The idea of the play is superb; it is deprived of effectiveness by this medley in style."[1]

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1. William Henri Eller, op.cit.pp 107, 108.

X. IBSEN'S APPEAL

What was the secret of Ibsen's irresistible appeal? After reading all his plays and meditating upon them, it seems to me it is in his mastery of character portrayal. Some of his characters have become real friends, and we are fully acquainted with their splendid qualities as well as their weaknesses. We rejoice as well as sympathize with them.

Though Ibsen kept himself aloof from making friends, yet he depicts his characters as distinct individuals. After reading "The Doll's House," who could help but possess a sympathizing understanding for Nora? The same could be said of Ellida in "The Lady from the Sea," and of many others. Perhaps the secret of his success in character portrayal lies in the fact that Ibsen wanted to be a painter, and to be a painter, one must be a close observer.

Ibsen was also a master i the technique of the beginning of action. He has the action begin at once and in most cases the duration of action is brief. But in "Ghosts" we have to wait until the end of the last act before we come to the Big Scene.

A notable characteristic of Ibsen, dating from his earliest plays, is his fondness for placing a strong man between two women, one of whom is fierce, the other gentle. In "Catilina" he has Cati-

lina between the savage vestal Furia and his gentle wife Aurelia. In the "Warriors at Helgeland" he places Sigurd between the Viking Hjordis and the gentle Dagny; in "The Feast at Solhaug" Gudmund is between Margit and Signe; in "Hedda Gabler" we find Lovborg between Hedda and Thea.

Ibsen's consistent plan throughout his life was to arouse the world to its need of ridding itself of false ideals, and his aim as a dramatist was to create in the mind of the observer the illusion that he was looking upon something real.

Eller affirms that Ibsen was the most powerful exponent of laying bare the truth of science in dramatic form, that he yielded it into form which others could now vary and adapt to the myriad new themes, and old themes made over.

"Ibsen has realized his aim,the traditional aim of all great poets, to write for eternity, to rear a monumentum aere perennius. More than that, not only his plays, but also all modern drama, became his monument, for there is scarcely a dramatist since his day whose work has not been influenced by the Norwegian Master Builder. Above all, the spirit of Ibsen has banished ghosts and admitted fresh air into our lives, the spirit that inspires everyone to

realize the strongest and best of which he is capable, to be himself nobly and fearlessly. And, as Richard Dehmel put it in a poem written at the time of Ibsen's death, in the dim future hover many figures who in coming ages will feel impelled to say, 'Thanks, Ibsen, thanks! ' "

1. A.E.Lucker, op.cit.p.289.

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing pages I have written of the life of Henrik Ibsen his personal appearance, his relation towards Björnson and his other friends. Since to Ibsen "friendship was a luxury," he lived rather a solitary life, spending his mornings, as a rule, working on his plays, and his afternoons in a quiet way, at times observing human nature around him. It is interesting to observe how some of his personal experiences are shown in his plays. We note that he made frequent use of the soliloquy in his early plays, but gradually broke away from that method. His works cover the three different stages - his early plays written in the romantic period, the next in the realistic, and his last plays in the mystical period.

Though Ibsen was read by few at first, he now stands as one of our foremost dramatists. Shaw says:"Ibsen supplies the want left by Shakespeare. He gives us not only ourselves, but ourselves in our own situations. The things that happen to his stage figures are things that happen to us. One consequence is that his plays are much more inportant to us than Shakespeare's. Another is that they are capable both of hurting us cruelly and of filling us with excited hopes of escape from idealistic tyrannies and with visions of intenser life in the future."[1]

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1. Bernard Shaw, The Quintessence of Ibsenism, pp. 330-331

TRANSLATIONS

"At the first sight, however, what will strike you in this theater, is an air of simplicity and of naturalness. Some simple citizens leading a very restrained life; houses where in the evening the lamp is lighted at the time when the shutters are closed, and which are really 'interiors.' .....(Ibsen) paints what he sees; in the manner of Matsys and of the old Flemish masters.... that is the life, the real life without affectation and without retouches. You wish for realism? There it is."

....."This drama, he says, is not a simple artistic attempt. It is a work of courage and of sincerity. It is not difficult to understand, and the symbols which one meets are transparent enough.

"Master Solness is the poet himself.

"Hilda is youth, also the imagination to which it is dangerous to listen.

"Madam Solness is the past with its sadness and its childishness.

"The old Brovik is the routine which Solness has destroyed.

"The young Brovik is modern utilitarianism for a long time driven back by the Ideal, by Art, and triumphant at last when Art drawn along on the wave of dreams, carried away by a wind of folly, rushes towards the clouds.

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1. Translation of quotation given on p. 59

"Then, if one passes to the ideas, the churches which Solness built at the beginning of his career, they are philosophical dramas, and in general, the religious or mystical works by which so many poets of his country have commenced; the ordinary houses which he began to build later, after a crisis of despair and of revolt, they are the human tendencies which, at the time when Ibsen in his modern dramas, tried to reform society by the theatre, accomplished in making the old mystical faith triumph in Scandinavia. This, while disappearing, united for them the culture of the Ideal and the love of the Beautiful of which all social movements of these countries, even the actual working movement, invariably bear the stamp.

"It is thus that Solness gives to the houses which he builds a vague appearance of a temple.

"Finally, the resolution which he makes of building no more enchanted castles, but to make them rest on strong foundations, symbolizes the last evolution of the genius of Ibsen, and perhaps that of our century.

"Does not one see, for some time, the taste for the mystery and for the dream being introduced little by little in all the domains, without the spirit renouncing to the positive methods and to the realistic procedure?"[1]

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1. Translation of quotation given on p.60

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